

SPOTLIGHT

Summer Addition

June 2016

Summertime Is Here

Summer has always been a special time of the year for many cultures. The longest day of the year is in June and is known as the Summer Solstice. The Ancient Greeks believed that the Summer Solstice was a time of celebration and freedom. The Chinese people honored the Summer Solstice as a balance to the darker energy of winter. The Vikings used the whole summer to gather and discuss new plans and ideas. They also travelled to bodies of water, which they believed had healing powers.

It took us in the United States a little longer to catch on. American schools used to meet all year. In the late 19th century, kids stopped coming to school in July and August because the buildings were too hot. Eventually, taking time off in the summer became an official part of our calendar.

For thousands of years, summer was a time of celebration, balance, and healing. Now that we have a summer vacation, we can use it as a time of rest and relaxation. This summer, be kind to yourself. Allow yourself to heal from the stress of the school year.

It's time to rejuvenate

Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again

—Nelson Mandela

Read more at

<http://www.skipprichard.com/13-inspirational-quotes-by-nelson-mandela/>



Shining on today's youth for tomorrow's future

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The Wilderness School

The Wilderness School is in East Hartland, Connecticut. It is a program that uses nature to teach teens about teamwork, problem solving, respect, and compassion. Some of the activities are canoeing, rock climbing, and a ropes course (like the photo above!) The Wilderness School gives teens who are having a difficult time at home or in school a chance to reflect and make strong friendships. Recently, a group of girls got to experience the Wilderness School for themselves!

I had so much fun at Wilderness School yesterday !! I was not expecting to laugh and smile that much. It was with all 3 units and I was a little worried about that at first, but we all got along and I even got closer to some of the other girls which was great. I am so glad I got to participate in this experience. Thank you so much! PS I loved the screaming and running activity!

—Sarah

I had a wonderful time. I felt like a normal kid for once. I wasn't focused on anything negative. The people who did it made me feel comfortable with doing new things. Thank you so much !

—Maddie

My experience at the Wilderness School was unbelievable fun even though I was kind of tired. They worked me up and they brought life to me. They taught me some more games and kept me busy and I recommend the Wilderness School to girls and boys that love adventuring.

—Jessie

I Was a Victim

By Reann

My name is Reann and I've been a victim of bullying. My experience with bullying dates back to elementary school. Because of my traumatic experiences as a toddler, I never really knew how to recollect myself or express my emotions. Leading me to become a little awkward. Not knowing how to dress, brush my hair correctly, or interact with others because no one was there to teach me. When I was four, mom one day packed her bags and never came back which then forced my father to work harder and extra to keep a roof over our heads. I am also a mix of different races, except my school was an all-white school and unexposed to other ethnicities, making me feel left out. I felt very unwelcome in elementary school. Kids would tease me when I had awkward stages like when my teeth did not fit my face or my metabolism kept me rail-skinny. Too skinny. Some would snicker at how I dressed and carried myself, and some would just not talk to me in case it risked their being liked by everyone else. There was one thing I was known for though, and that was my talent in the arts. I embraced the one thing people noticed and had positive things to say about. Because of my passion for the arts, I entered in the lottery to go to a magnet school that was specially made for that. I couldn't believe it but I GOT IN!!! Greater Hartford Academy for the Arts! Wow!

I wondered if they'd like me there, and as the first day flew by, I went home smiling. There were diverse children that wore similar clothing to me, talked to me, laughed with me, and best of all, be-friended me. I finally fit somewhere! Also I was studying my favorite thing for four hours.....nothing could go wrong. Sooner than later I was friends with almost every one and all the things I didn't know how to do like brush my hair, dress nicely, and apply make-up, the girls helped me out. I grew out of my awkward stage over time and became a young woman. A young woman that for once in her life could pass as "pretty."

Life was great...until another tragic event hit me. One morning I woke up and got ready for school; with my hair, make-up, and clothes all done, and I clearly remember when I came

Playing it Safe On the Internet

The internet is a fun place to be but is also a place where trouble can come your way.

Here are 4 Safety Rules of Thumb:

- ♦ **Have an Exit Plan**—never make your screen name is not your real name. Bad people will find you..
- ♦ **Be a Bit Paranoid**—don't post or send risky pictures or post b/c you have no control where they go. Don't share you school or address online. People can find you.
- ♦ **Tell Somebody**—if you feel uncomfortable in any way tell a responsible adult.
- ♦ **Stay in Safe**—there are lots of icky places on the internet. They are there to take advantage of you. Stay away
- ♦ **For more information follow the link and learn**



<https://love146.org/action/online-safety/omg-the-internet/>

I Was a Victim continued

downstairs to eat, my dad got off the phone and just stared at me. When I opened my mouth to ask what was wrong he cut me off and told me someone from my school was dead. Dead? DEAD? The message from my school didn't tell us who, but that guidance and extra support would be given. I pushed away my breakfast. Who would be missing when I got to school? Who DIED?

I entered the school, nervous and scared at what I was going to know. Part of me didn't want to know. But then I picked my head up. I wish I didn't. Nervousness turned to nausea. Her pictures hung everywhere. Decorated every locker, every square inch of the school. Her beautiful face, goofy pictures of her with RIP Jenna printed over her head. No. Not Jenna. No, no, no, NO-O-O! I broke down in front of every one. One of my friends committed suicide. It hit me hard and home. I'm still and never will be 100% over it, but back then few years ago I couldn't handle any more trauma. I stopped interacting with people. I mourned and suffered 24/7 and fell off the face of the earth...to a dark place where no one or nothing could ever hurt me again. But life went on and bad things swung and hit me anyway, no matter how many times I prayed and begged for no more. I began cutting my skin, my hair, burning myself. I also became angry. I became a fighter. I fought out of anger and vengefulness, and hate. I left the school that gave me pride in every step I took and showed me who I truly am. I couldn't walk the halls anymore with my dear friend. The ghost of her hearty laugh, her beauty, her voice, haunted me. GHAA was empty without her. Therefore I had no reason to stay if every day was a whole new struggle of missing her again.

As close to Jenna as I was, she can't come back and tell me what the hell she was thinking. Only left a note supposedly found with her. As far as I was told, the note revealed she died over bullies. I had no knowledge she was being picked on because I was so full of myself. I was always talking about me. Me and boys. Parents and I, friends and I, me and money. If I could go back I swear I would have stopped being so self-concerned and asked her what she wanted to talk about. I would tell her that bullies exist and you have to choose your battles and life gets harder before it gets easier and that's why you surround yourself with great people to help you through, to cheer you on. I would tell her that even if it wasn't me, everybody has somebody out there to talk to and be supported by; you just have to look sometimes. I would remind her of the future that was at her fingertips even if she couldn't necessarily see it. It was out there and I know in my heart it was bright. She just had to hold on a little longer and a little tighter.

She made the mistake to let go, but I made the mistake not to hold my hands out to her. From all the hurt in my 15 years of life, most I left out of this story, I made the same mistake Jenna did. I tried taking my life, in September 2015. My future was too clouded for me to see and I too slipped and tried to let go. I almost made it. I saw death. But something called my higher power and let my critical condition recover versus get worse. I lucked out, with all the hands outstretched to help me. I, for some reason, thank god, fully accepted it, and here I am telling the story I will one day actually write all of and publish. The story that Jenna deserves told. The story of all the hurt people out there, who struggle and can't see they deserve anything about them to be told. I deserve it too. Thank you for asking and giving me the privilege to write.

Accidental Tragedy Part Two

By Wilcheena

My Story to Triumph part 2

I wanted to share with you how I have been doing since the last Spotlight Edition. New Year's Eve 2014, I made a bad decision. I decided that I wanted to bring in the New Year's with my friends. We had party, party, party on our mind. We had been chilling' and drinking and decided to jump in the car. There was a terrible accident and I was injured very badly. The people who I thought were my friends left the scene and left me for dead. It was a life changing event. Not only because of the physical injuries, but more so that I had to re-evaluate friends. I had to decide what I should require of friends.

Making Choices...

I am a fighter by nature. They told me I would never walk, talk, or do anything. But I did not keep believing that. Since my accident, I began to walk but it was a very hard road. I learned a lot of medical terms, feel like a doctor. It is stressful. It been hard. I think about how to do things, but my body has a hard time doing what I think. I have faith and believe that God gives his battles to the strongest soldiers.

Sheena shall overcome...

Sometimes I wonder "why me?" but I am not a quitter. Sometimes I feel like "why me?" but I know that God is with me. I had bumps in the road. Days I wanted to just die. But I had to just wake up and overcome. This is my truth. I am a survivor. I am not a victim. I have a great support system and that keeps me and sustains me. I have overcome so much

The victor's lesson....

Don't ever get in cars with people who are drunk or drinking. Call an Uber or tell someone to come and get you. If you have no one, call the police. It has been 18 months. We need to educate our young teens. Spinal cord injuries are so serious. You take things for granted: walking, talking, writing. All this can be taken away in a twinkle of an eye. Young people should take a tour and see people with these injuries before they end up like I did. One bad decision and life will change. I hope some people can learn from my story.

**Send your
submission for
the Fall Issue**

Email your submissions by February 22, 2016 to
dayna.snell@ct.gov

Spotlight Newsletter

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11 TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING SEX TRAFFICKER BEHAVIOR

1. Gets **jealous** easily, seems **controlling** or exhibits **violence**
2. Is **significantly older** than you or your friend
3. **Promises** things that seem **too good** to be true
4. **Encourages** you to engage in **illegal** activities to achieve your goals and dreams
5. **Suggests** that they know how to help you make a lot of **money**
6. **Buys** expensive **gifts** or likes to **flash** his/her **money**
7. Is **vague** about his/her **profession** and you can't provide what they really do
8. Gets **pushy** or **demanding** about **sex**
9. Wants to take **suggestive** photos, encourages you to **model** or **dance for money**
10. Makes you **feel** responsible for his/her **financial** stability.
11. Very **open** about **financial matters**

If you or a friend is involved with someone like this, call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: 1-800-THE-LOST or online
www.cybertipline.org.



Congratulations to the Class of 2016



Carmen, Fitch Senior High School

